

52 *On a Man's Writing*
Memoirs of Himself.

be in the disclosure of a mind so wonderfully singular as his.* We are almost willing to have such a being preserved to all the unsightly minutiae and anomalies of its form, to be placed as an unique in the moral muséum of the world. Rousseau's impious reverence to the Divine Judge leads me to suggest, as I conclude the consideration, that the history of each man's life, though it should not be written by himself or by any mortal hand, is thus far unerringly recorded, will one day be finished in truth, and one other day yet to come, will be brought to a final estimate. . A mind accustomed to grave reflections is sometimes led involuntarily into a curiosity of awful conjecture, which asks, What are those words which I should read this night, if, as to Belshazzar, a hand of prophetic shade were sent to write before me the identical expression, or the momentous import, of the sentence in which that final estimate will be declared ?

* There is indeed one case in which this kind of honesty would be so signally-useful to mankind, that it would deserve almost to be canonized into a "virtue. If statesmen, including monarchs, courtiers, ministers, senators, popular leaders, ambassadors, &c., would publish, before they go in the triumph of virtue, to the "last audit," or leave to be published after they are gone, each a frank exposition of motives, intrigues, cabals, and manoeuvres, the worship which mankind have rendered to power and rank would cease to be, what it has always been, a mere blind *superstition* when such rational grounds should come to be shown for the homage. It might contribute to a happy exorcism of that spirit which has never suffered nations to be at peace; while it would give an altered and less delusive character to history. Great service in this way, but unfortunately late, is in the course of being rendered in our times, by the publication of private memoirs, written by persons connected or acquainted with those of the highest order. Let any one look at the exhibition of the very centre of the dignity and power of a great nation, as given in Pepys's Memoirs, though with the omission in that publication, as I am informed on the best authority, of sundry passages contained in the manuscript, of such a colour that their production would have exceeded the very utmost license allowable by public decorum. I need not revert to works now comparatively ancient, such as Lord Melbourn's Diary.